

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND STATE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES,
COOPERATING.

STATES RELATIONS SERVICE,
OFFICE OF EXTENSION WORK SOUTH,
WASHINGTON, D. C.

SAFE FARMING AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE SOUTH IN 1918.

By BRADFORD KNAPP, *Office of Extension Work in the South.*

AN agricultural program for the Southern States for the year 1918 must be carefully considered by the Federal Government, by the States, counties, communities, and individual farmers. Any program would fall short of the ideal which did not fully propose to sustain our general scheme of agriculture, support our people, and at the same time contribute in the largest possible degree to the real needs of our Nation. It must be a possible, a practical, and a patriotic program.

During the past few years there has been a direct and positive tendency in Southern agriculture away from dependence on one crop and toward a better balanced husbandry. This is indicated by the increased production of corn, small grains, velvet beans, peanuts, hay, potatoes, and other crops and the somewhat stabilized production of cotton even in the face of advancing prices. It is also evident to even the casual observer that Southern farmers are "going into the livestock industry." Especially are they increasing the output of hogs, beef cattle and dairy products. Large packing interests would not be building packing houses in the South were this not true.

The Department of Agriculture announced a program for agricultural production, beginning in the fall of 1917. This program consists essentially of the following elements:—

- (a) Each community should produce its own food and feed so far as practicable.
- (b) Production of non-perishable staples should be increased beyond local needs in each locality in which they can be produced most profitably. These staples include wheat, rye, beans, and rice; oats, barley, sorghum, corn, and buckwheat being left for consideration in the spring of 1918.
- (c) Sugar-beet and sugar-cane production should be increased in districts where factories are accessible and production conditions are favorable.
- (d) Commercial production of perishables should be increased above normal only as the facilities for transportation and marketing are assured. The home vegetable garden should be encouraged to the extent of supplying as fully as possible the needs of the family growing it.

Likewise, the Department has announced that sound crop practices ought to be continued; that definite crop rotations should not be seriously disturbed, and that all well-established agricultural practices should be carefully safeguarded in every way. The Department will, from time to time, through the proper channels, make announcements regarding its agricultural program of production, and when announced, this program should be followed as definitely as the soldiers follow an outlined plan of campaign in fighting the enemy.

SAFE FARMING.

The writer has long advocated a system for Southern farmers, which we have called Safe Farming. By safe farming we mean a system which provides food for the people and feed for the livestock of the South; which maintains our soil fertility and then devotes a reasonable acreage to the production of cash crops to be sold in the markets of the world.

Safe farming presumes an income for the farmer not from one crop but dependent upon a number of well chosen products of the farm, livestock as well as crops, making a better balanced agriculture, a safer system, and a better rural life. I am firmly convinced that the farmers of the South ought to change as they have changed in the past few years until they reach a substantial basis which I have endeavored to describe as safe farming.

A better balanced husbandry as well as high prices of farm products during the past few years have made Southern farmers more money than they ever made before. A taste of prosperity from a combination of these two things should prompt us to continue the development of safe farming, which is a better plan than mere diversification. Attached is a table taken from the Monthly Crop Report for December, 1917, showing the estimated value of all crops per State for the 15 Southern States, comparing 1916 and 1917. From this statement you will see that the value of all farm crops in the Southern States in 1917 was estimated to be the enormous sum of \$5,164,696,000 or at the rate of \$955.17 for each male agricultural worker in these States as shown by the last census, and at the rate of \$1,673.58 per farm as shown by the same census. This does not include any income from livestock. The Southern States produced practically five-thirteenths of the total value of all crops in the United States and almost equal to the total value of all crops for the entire United States for the census year 1909.

I attach a table also to show that farmers of the South handled 8½ per cent more acres of land in 1917 than they did in 1916. This table, of course, is not based upon all crops, but only the ten leading

farm crops. In some States they handled more than 20 per cent greater acreage than in 1916. The explanation is simple:

First. Under a system of diversified farming every farm laborer can handle a greater acreage because of a better distribution of the labor on the farm.

Second. Farmers of the South responded to the patriotic call of the President of the United States and worked harder than they had worked before. I should hate to think that these two reasons would fail to account for a large acreage in the season of 1918.

THE REASON FOR SELF-SUPPORT.

Are there any added reasons why the South should produce its own food and feed in 1918 which did not exist heretofore? Emphatically there are. Not only is the food problem still the most important agricultural problem in the world, but the transportation problem adds another element of very serious concern. This great Nation is taxing its every energy to defeat a well planned and long prepared effort to overthrow democracy in the world. The defeat of this Nation would mean the overthrow of everything held dear by men, women, and children of America. We are fighting for our very independence. Under such circumstances the more we can contribute to the national cause and the less we burden the Nation or other parts of the Nation to help us, the more we do in our own interest and in the interest of the Nation. Under our present circumstances the South can not afford to burden other sections of the country to produce her food, and above all she can not afford to tax the already overburdened transportation system of the United States to bring the food to her. She must grow it herself. This is self defense and it is national defense.

WHAT THE SOUTH MUST DO.

I would suggest, then, that the following items be considered carefully by everyone.

First. A home garden for every farm family and every town and village family in the South to supply the home needs, with a sufficient surplus to can or dry for future use. In this home garden I would include an ample supply of Irish and sweet potatoes. There ought to be on every farm, as far as possible, either cane or sorghum to produce sirup.

I would not advise going into the production of perishable products on an extensive scale without knowing that there is a market for them, a system of handling already established and, if necessary, transpor-

tation facilities to get them to the market. In other words, we ought not to develop new trucking areas in the South in this time of trouble. All well-established trucking areas where farmers have had experience in the business will, of course, continue their operations, but with cautious regard to the needs of their established markets.

Second. We should sustain the production of corn in the South. For the first time in many years market reports show local needs are being met by local supply and that some exportation of corn has taken place. With an increase of population, with the many army camps in our midst, and, more particularly, with an increase of our livestock, we can not afford to let down on the production of corn. It would be a disaster for us to have increased livestock production and not provide the feed to sustain it. There is no profit in livestock unless the farmer produces his own feed. There is always danger after a large yield in any crop of reduced acreage the next year. Guard the corn crop in 1918. It means safety for the people and safety for our growing livestock industry. Remember that although the country produced an immense crop of corn in 1917, an unusually large proportion of the great northwestern crop was injured by frost and, therefore, soft and unmarketable.

Third. I need not say anything regarding the small grains, because that item was attended to in the fall seeding.

Fourth. Produce the hay and forage crops necessary to amply supply the livestock on the farm for one year and an excess for the sake of safety and for city and town consumption. We made a great increase the past year in velvet beans, soybeans, peanuts, cowpeas and other crops of that sort. These should be maintained and increased again this year. Remember that these crops have been actual cash crops of the farm this year. They should be dignified as a permanent part of a general cropping system. In the year 1918 peanuts and soybeans are important because of their oil value when the Nation and the world are short of fats; while velvet beans are fast becoming one of our greatest sources of feed for livestock. When the world is short of wheat the South can use its peanut meal and soybean meal as partial substitutes for wheat in bread-making.

Fifth. We ought to maintain and increase our supply of meat, eggs, and milk. The Nation is asking for a large production of hogs. No section can produce hogs more economically than the Southern States. In many sections the county agricultural agents are assisting farmers in establishing systems of cooperative shipment and marketing, while packing industries are opening up in the territory. Farmers are receiving good prices and the marketing systems are becoming well es-

tablished. We should increase our hog production this year. Thousands of head of improved breeding stock of beef have been brought in and this year farmers ought to make a great drive to increase the beef of the country by using only pure-bred, beef-type sires with native cows. We should not forget the poultry, which should be increased upon every farm until we have an adequate supply for family use and to supply cities and towns. More careful feeding, breeding, and selection should be the rule. Town families can do this as well as farmers.

Sixth. When the living has been amply provided for and we have enough to insure food for ourselves and feed for our livestock, we should grow as much cotton as we can handle. The Nation needs cotton as well as food and feed; both are important; neither should be sacrificed for the other. The high price may tempt some people to greatly increase the acreage, but it seems to me that the best plan would be to look to the food needs of the South and then devote the maximum of energy to the cotton crop. To sacrifice either or to place too much emphasis on one part of the program would be unwise. Let us remember that 1916 and 1917 were poor cotton years, relatively speaking. In 1912, with not quite a million acres more than we had in 1917, we produced 13,703,000 bales of cotton. With only 900,000 acres more in 1911 (a good year) than in 1916 (a poor year), we produced over 4,200,000 more bales of cotton. The average acreage for the last nine years has been a trifle over 34,000,000 acres. In spite of the difficulties, with a normal acreage, with a good season, and with the use of the best possible cultural methods, we ought to produce a large crop. Nothing should be said to discredit or minimize the importance of cotton production in 1918, but it seems to me that it would be a mistake, from a financial standpoint, to throw away the great triumph of the past two years by returning to all cotton and compelling a large importation of northern foods and feeds to sustain our people and our livestock, or else sacrifice the livestock. Let us maintain the balance, and I believe we can meet the larger need of all concerned.

Seventh. In 1918 every farmer in the South ought to save all possible waste products on the farm. Economize on time, labor, and seed. Save in harvesting time. Use the best implements and more horse power and less hand power. Sell excess products of the farm and pay living expenses. A surplus of hogs, eggs, poultry, soybeans, peanuts, corn, or such other farm products as are adapted to your locality should be produced for sale from the farm besides the production of cotton.

In this time of high prices get out of debt. The South will never be a really prosperous agricultural country until our farmers begin to save and lay up money to finance their own operations. The golden

opportunity is here. Put your money into Liberty Bonds and other Government securities and you will find that you have become independent, because these can be made the basis of a better credit system, enabling you to operate practically upon a cash basis.

FEDERAL COOPERATION.

The States and Nation are doing all possible things to assist the farmers. By cooperation between the Federal Department of Agriculture and the agricultural colleges, a great national education system has been established, with county agents and county home demonstration agents in most counties of the South. This system is part of the national defense. These people are busy from early morning until late into the night assisting farmers and farm women in the solution of individual problems, bringing them definite information regarding the Nation's needs and helping to organize campaigns of production, of saving, of conservation, better marketing, etc., all in the interest not only of the farmer but in the larger interest of the Nation itself.

The strength of the Nation is measured by the strength of its weakest part. Let us keep the agriculture of the South strong for the sake of the strength of the Nation in this hour of its great need. Let us keep her self-sustaining and self-reliant, a national agricultural asset, able to honor drafts for food and clothing for ourselves and for the rest of the country, with a fair contribution to the larger interests of humanity itself. The call is a big one, but with the immense strides Southern farmers have made in the past ten years it is not too big a contract for them to undertake.

APPENDIX.

Aereage of selected crops in the 15 Southern States (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia) in 1916 and 1917, and per cent of increase or decrease.

	1916	1917	Per cent of increase or decrease from 1916
	Acres (000 omitted)	Acres (000 omitted)	
Cotton.....	34,775	33,323	—4
Corn.....	42,059	47,589	13
Wheat.....	9,890	9,661	—2
Oats.....	6,876	6,309	—8
Hay.....	7,800	8,658	11
Potatoes.....	545	748	37
Sweet potatoes.....	713	888	25
Peanuts.....	1,076	2,084	94
Velvet beans.....	1,860	5,183	179
Kafirs.....	2,314	2,684	16
Total.....	107,908	117,127	8.5

Aggregate crop value—15 Southern States.

	Value of 13 leading farm crops.*			Estimated value of all crops		
	1917	1916	5-yr. average 1911-15	1917	1916	5-yr. average 1911-15
Alabama.....	\$218,672,000	\$124,115,000	\$134,591,000	\$291,563,000	\$165,487,000	\$179,455,000
Arkansas.....	262,463,000	181,378,000	98,507,000	359,538,000	248,463,000	134,941,000
Florida.....	42,956,000	25,374,000	18,570,000	104,771,000	61,888,000	45,293,000
Georgia.....	423,332,000	279,258,000	189,098,000	542,733,000	358,023,000	242,433,000
Kentucky.....	308,082,000	181,475,000	115,306,000	375,710,000	221,311,000	140,617,000
Louisiana.....	194,278,000	115,626,000	67,041,000	313,352,000	186,494,000	108,131,000
Maryland.....	89,198,000	61,987,000	37,609,000	123,879,000	86,093,000	53,235,000
Mississippi.....	262,505,000	144,432,000	113,026,000	359,596,000	197,852,000	154,830,000
North Carolina.....	300,849,000	195,895,000	136,502,000	417,846,000	272,076,000	189,586,000
Oklahoma.....	276,846,000	198,939,000	122,990,000	329,579,000	236,832,000	146,417,000
South Carolina.....	300,213,000	153,640,000	121,595,000	389,887,000	199,532,000	157,916,000
Tennessee.....	223,931,000	164,550,000	111,220,000	290,819,000	213,701,000	144,442,000
Texas.....	646,966,000	570,199,000	353,461,000	788,983,000	695,365,000	431,050,000
Virginia.....	244,353,000	152,706,000	88,119,000	344,159,000	215,079,000	124,111,000
West Virginia.....	91,274,000	60,325,000	40,345,000	132,281,000	87,428,000	58,471,000
Total.....	\$3,885,918,000	\$2,609,899,000	\$1,747,980,000	\$5,164,696,000	\$3,445,624,000	\$2,310,928,000
33 Northern States...	6,806,443,000	4,445,447,000	3,191,162,000	8,416,072,000	5,540,246,000	3,987,292,000
Entire United States	10,692,361,000	7,055,346,000	4,939,142,000	13,580,768,000	8,985,870,000	6,298,220,000

* Corn, wheat, oats, barley, rye, buckwheat, flaxseed, rice, potatoes, sweet potatoes, tame hay, tobacco and lint cotton.

Income per farm from all crops

State	1909 Census	1917 Estimated
Alabama.....	\$548.83	\$1,109.01
Arkansas.....	556.27	1,674.77
Florida.....	722.61	2,094.74
Georgia.....	778.61	1,864.88
Kentucky.....	536.19	1,449.58
Louisiana.....	641.55	2,599.43
Maryland.....	897.74	2,532.12
Mississippi.....	536.89	1,310.56
North Carolina.....	563.17	1,646.84
Oklahoma.....	701.68	1,732.87
South Carolina.....	804.74	2,209.81
Tennessee.....	490.65	1,182.13
Texas.....	713.63	1,888.55
Virginia.....	546.31	1,870.24
West Virginia.....	417.59	1,363.16
Average for 15 States.....	\$625.57	\$1,689.74

*December, 1917, Crop Report.

NOTE—The number of farms as of 1909 used in calculations in this table.
February 1, 1918.

